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TESTIMONY RE: Proposed Bill No. 205
An Act Requiring Certain Thermostat Manufacturers to Pay Incentives
for Return of Thermostats
Environment Committee
March 7, 2011

Good morning Senator Meyers and Representative Roy and members of the Environment Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA), the professional organization for registered nurses in Connecticut.

I am Mary Jane Williams Ph.D., RN current chairperson of Government Relations Committee for the Connecticut Nurses Association and professor emeritus from Central Connecticut State University. I have practiced nursing for over 45 years and have been educating nurses in Connecticut in both the public and private sector for over 35 years.

The purpose and intent of this legislation is to address the issue of the potential "Environmental Hazards" related to the continued existence and usage in our state of Mercury Thermostats, when we know they are hazardous to the health of the public. It should be know that in 2002, Connecticut passed a comprehensive mercury products bill that phased out the sale of mercury-containing products. Products containing greater than one gram of mercury (including thermostats) were banned for sale after July 1, 2004.

- Mercury containing thermostats are a significant source of preventable mercury pollution. Thermostats represent the largest amount of mercury in household

products, and—unless the necessary steps are taken—will remain a significant source of mercury in the municipal waste stream and continue to contaminate New England's environment.

- Each traditional thermostat contains 3-5 grams of mercury. There are over 1.7 million mercury thermostats in CT homes; each contains about 4 grams of mercury. CT thermostats contain over 11,500 pounds of mercury.
- Because mercury is a persistent, bio-accumulative toxin in very small amounts, releases of mercury from thermostats contribute to local, regional and global mercury pollution.
- Mercury is a potent neurotoxin that has historically been used in manufacturing processes and products without concern for its impacts on human health, fish and wildlife, or the environment. It is highly toxic, and accumulates in the environment as it moves up the food chain.
- In the 1990s, studies of fish in water bodies in Canada and the Northeastern states indicated that they contained unexpectedly high amounts of methyl mercury, making their consumption dangerous, especially for pregnant women, young children and wildlife such as minks and loons.
- A single gram of mercury is enough to contaminate all of the fish in a 20-acre lake, making them unsafe to eat. Exposure to mercury even at a low level causes damage to the functioning and development of the nervous system both in utero and in growing children. Exposure to methyl mercury (the form of mercury that bio-accumulates in fish) can cause severe damage to the functioning and development of the central nervous system, and is particularly harmful for fetuses and young children. Scientists at the Environmental Protection Agency

estimate that 1 in 6 women of childbearing age in the United States have unsafe mercury levels in their bodies. This translates to over 630,000 babies born at risk for mercury exposure annually.

- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimated that 2-3 million thermostats come out of service each year. Over the past decade, TRC has collected less than 5% of what EPA estimated came out of service. Where are these Thermostats discarded and what threat are they to health? Questions that must be answered.
- Each thermostat contains about four grams of mercury. Tens of millions of mercury thermostats containing several hundred tons of mercury are still in use in U.S. homes and businesses.
- Adopting strong state laws with financial incentives and performance standards for recycling mercury thermostats is needed to drastically incentivize the program and prevent mercury pollution.

We urge you to support Proposed Bill 205 AN ACT REQUIRING CERTAIN THERMOSTAT MANUFACTURERS TO PAY INCENTIVES FOR THE RETURN OF MERCURY THERMOSTATS. It has huge implications related to the potential health of the citizens of Connecticut and the most vulnerable population, children who pay the ultimate price for ineffective policy through life long preventable illness.

Thank You